

# TOWN PLANNING AND HOUSING.

*Supplement to  
The Architectural Review*

## LIVERPOOL AND ITS TRAFFIC STREETS



LIVERPOOL is not a manufacturing town, and cannot boast of any large or distinctive industries; nevertheless she has the largest export trade in the kingdom, and probably the largest and heaviest road traffic of goods in transit.

The whole of the east side of the River Mersey is occupied by docks, the only break in the continuity being about midway, which may be described as the commercial centre of the city. This commercial area occupies the site on which the old town originally stood, the arrangement of the streets, though in many cases widened and improved, being practically the same to-day as it was two hundred years ago when the first dock was constructed on the site now occupied by the Custom House.

A quarter-mile radius from the Town Hall will embrace practically the whole of the administrative activity of the port. In this area are situated the cotton, corn, provision, and stock exchanges, the great shipping companies, the chief banks and insurance offices, the municipal and government buildings, the general post office, and the offices of Liverpool's most prominent merchants.

A study of the plan of Liverpool will suggest that it is laid out in the form of a fan with all the main thoroughfares converging to a point, such point being the commercial centre referred to. In addition to these radial roads, several other main streets will be seen running more or less parallel to the line of docks. We have therefore these

two distinct systems of streets which may be regarded as the basis of Liverpool's plan, providing for the two main classes of traffic, namely: goods in transit, and internal or suburban traffic. (Although this latter is termed suburban, there is a steadily increasing traffic by self-propelled vehicles destined for the manufacturing districts of Lancashire which at no distant date will be of considerable magnitude.)

The rapid building-up of the city and the consequent extension of its boundaries may be said to have taken place during the past one hundred years, and the necessity of providing for the constantly increasing traffic becomes daily more urgent. The municipality of years ago widened many of the principal thoroughfares to what was then considered sufficient for the increased traffic, and these self-same thoroughfares during recent years have at a great cost been widened to what, in present judgment, will accommodate the traffic for all time. Though past generations in England have failed to show any very remarkable prescience or foresight in the matter of town development, our predecessors in Liverpool cannot be altogether blamed for failing to realise, on the comparatively slender experience behind them, the enormous strides with which the commercial growth of the city and the science of locomotion have advanced. Even within the last few years the area of Liverpool has been more than trebled. Up to 1895 it comprised an area of 5,210 acres; to-day its borough boundary comprises 16,619 acres; and in these

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added districts the radial thoroughfares were in most cases narrow country roads which experience had shown would very soon be quite inadequate for traffic requirements.

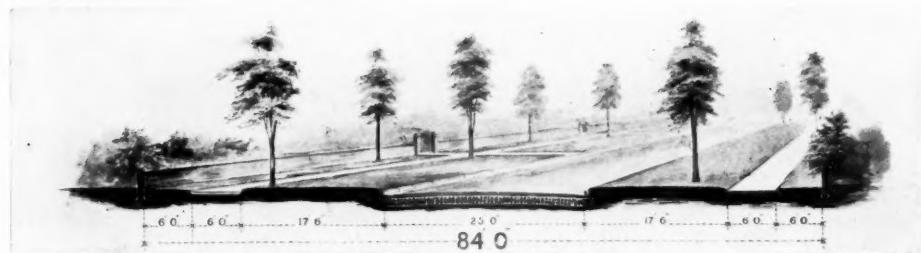
The following extract from the Report of the London Traffic Branch of the Board of Trade (1910) indicates the progressive activity of the corporation in the matter of street improvements:—

"The City of Liverpool furnishes a good example of forethought in designing a system of roads and carrying it into execution in anticipation of future requirements, at a time when land could be obtained on relatively favourable terms. As far back as 1859 improvements on a large scale had been contemplated. It was then intended to form a continuous broad road, mainly outside the municipal area, and encircling it at an average distance of about two miles from the centre; but the project came to nothing, the extension of the city having already proceeded so far that the expense of acquiring the necessary land and buildings was regarded as prohibitive. The project could not now be revived without incurring a still heavier expense, owing to the great increase in the area occupied by buildings that has taken place in the last fifty years.

"Still the need for improved radial and circular communication continued to be felt, and latterly a complete system of roads, designed by Mr. John A. Brodie, the City Engineer, was adopted by the corporation, and is now in course of being carried into execution. The boundary of the city had

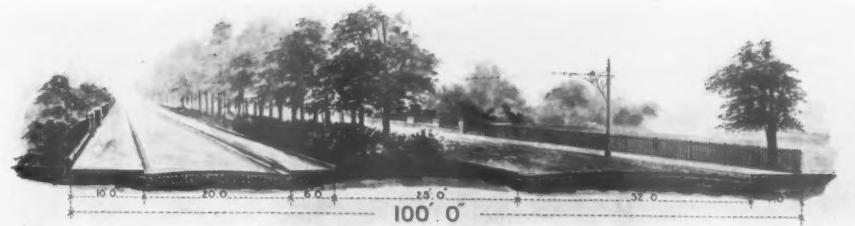
been largely extended in 1895, and the new roads are wholly within the new municipal area. They form part of a complete design, and consist of a number of arterial roads radiating into the country, intersected by a broad road known as the Queen's Drive, which encircles the city on the landward side at an average distance of about four miles from the centre. Though this distance is somewhat greater than could be desired, it is the least at which land could be procured at a reasonable price, and even so the line has had to be diverted in places in order to avoid hills, buildings, and property of exceptional value. Notwithstanding these minor imperfections, Mr. Brodie has succeeded in laying out a circular road nearly eight miles in length and varying in width from 84 to 108 ft., supplemented by new or widened radiating roads, one of which has a width of no less than 114 ft. The first section of the Queen's Drive was opened in 1904, others were opened in 1906 and 1909, the greater part of the remainder is either complete or in course of construction, and though certain sections, where terms have not been settled, are in abeyance, they all form parts of a complete scheme and will be carried into execution as opportunity and funds allow.

"In every case the land has been obtained by negotiation with individual landowners, some of whom gave land, varying from 36 ft. to as much as 60 ft. in width, free, and sold to the corporation as much more as was required to make up the maximum width. The corporation, as a rule,



QUEEN'S DRIVE: ELM HALL ESTATE, MOSSLEY HILL

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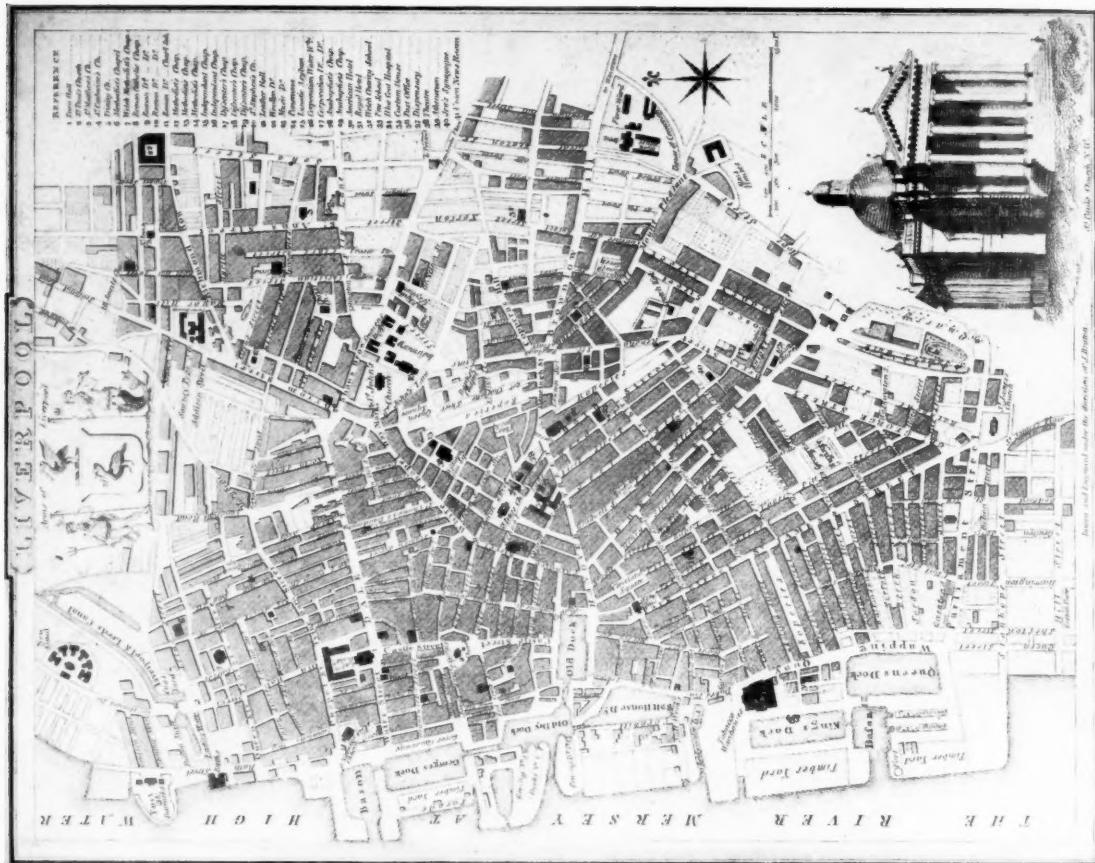
AIGBURTH ROAD

bore the first cost of construction, the owners agreeing to accept a frontage charge, covering the cost of street works up to a width of 36 ft., when the adjoining land should come to be developed. On such terms the bulk of the land has been acquired, without excessive cost to the corporation, while the expenses of street works will be recouped when the land is developed, so that the ultimate municipal charge will be limited to the interest on the capital cost in the period between construction and development. Negotiations on these lines were not always easy, but landowners, with few exceptions, came to see that it was in their own interest to facilitate the construction of wide roads which could not fail to enhance the value of their property, while public spirit was enlisted in furthering an enterprise obviously beneficial to the whole community. The corporation has thus secured the construction of a circular road 84 ft. in width, which, when completely occupied, will admit of a 50 ft. roadway, affording accommodation for two lines of tramway and four other lines of traffic, besides two footpaths and two double rows of trees. In other cases they aim at a total width of 120 ft., which will admit of two tramway lines in the centre laid in grass, with a roadway of 24 ft. wide for ordinary wheeled traffic on either side, in addition to footpaths and trees. So long as traffic continues light, the whole of the available width is not utilised, and, as now constructed, the width of the roadway of

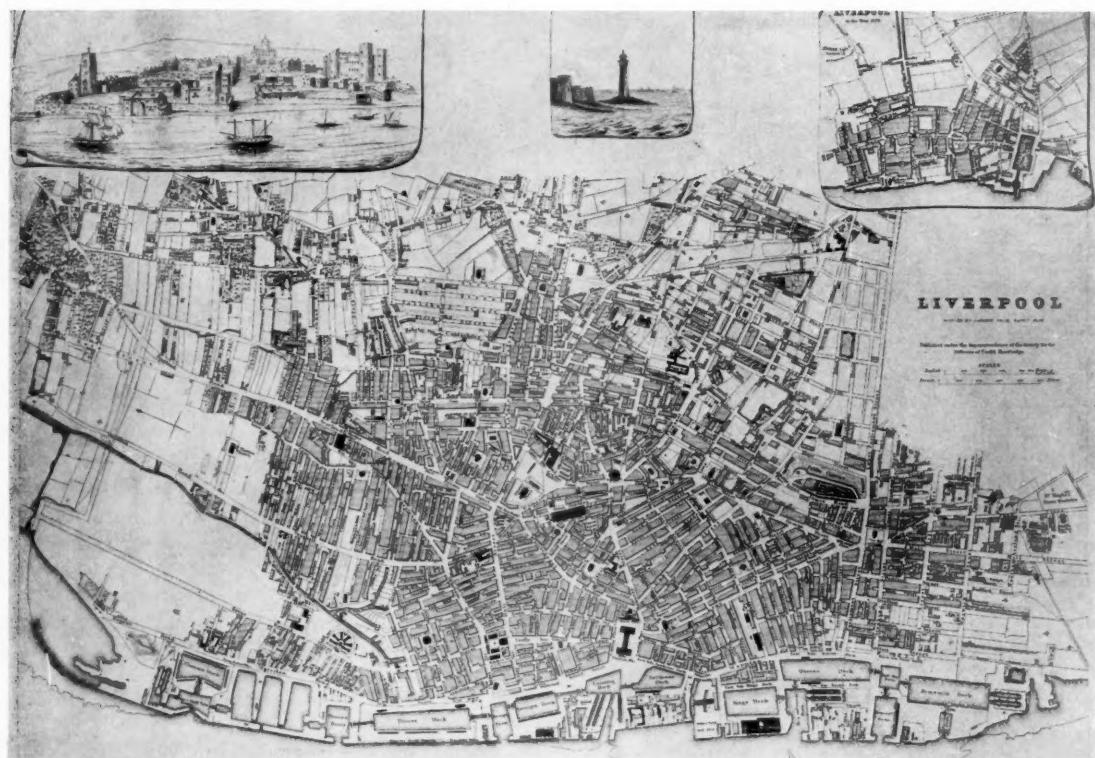
the Queen's Drive does not generally exceed 25 ft. By a judicious employment of their funds, the total cost of the Queen's Drive, including street works, has not averaged more than £7,000 per mile, while nearer the centre the cost of new roads has averaged £70,000, and in the heart of the city £350,000 per mile."

The necessity for providing an outside road skirting the city and one which would intersect and connect up the various roads approaching the business centre, and which would also render accessible the north and south ends of Liverpool without going into the already busy streets, was recognised more than sixty years ago. At that time a scheme was under consideration by the corporation for the construction of such a road. The width then proposed was 180 ft., to be laid out through undeveloped land at the limits of the then built-up area, which would have formed a continuous open space or park-way easily accessible from all parts for traffic and recreation purposes. This scheme would have been of the greatest benefit to the prosperity of Liverpool, which depends, as do all large centres of population, on ample facilities for the rapid circulation of traffic; and the failure to carry the scheme into execution has been an irreparable loss to the city. To-day, however, thanks to a far-seeing Health Committee and Corporation, her citizens are within measurable distance of seeing the completion of a boulevard or ring street, which, so

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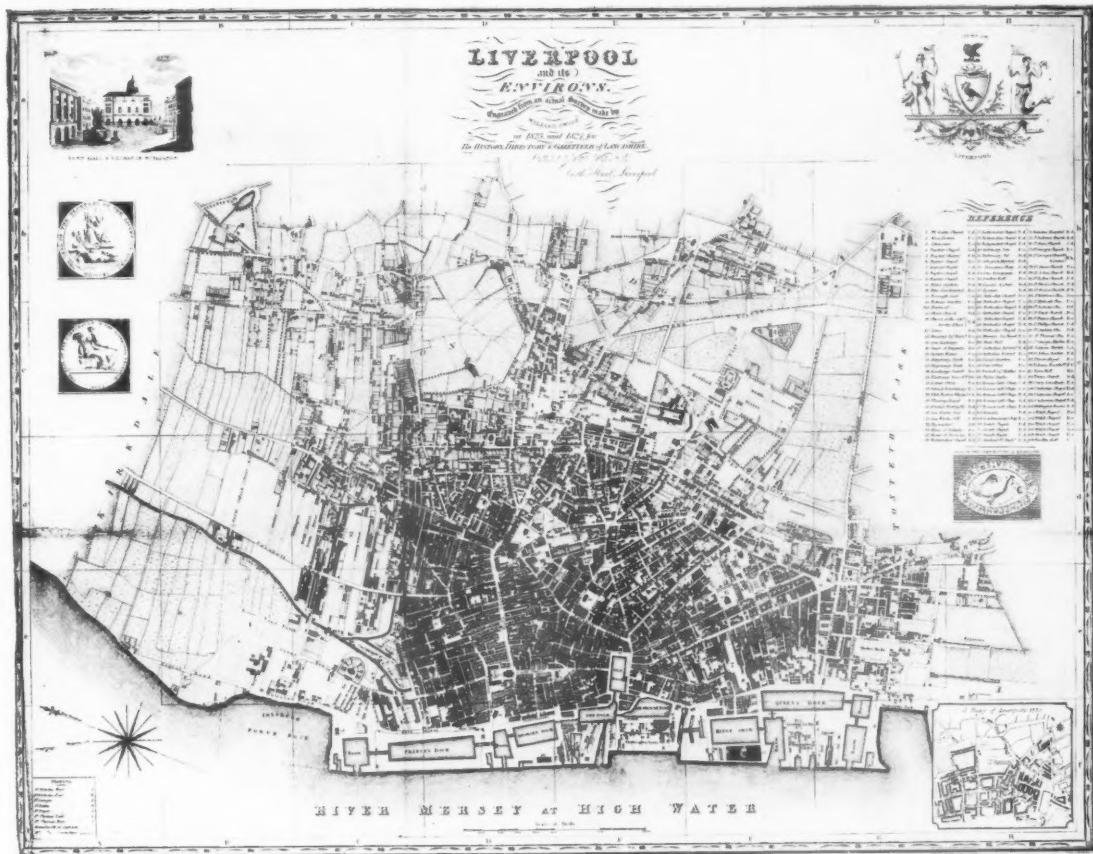


PLAN OF LIVERPOOL IN 1807

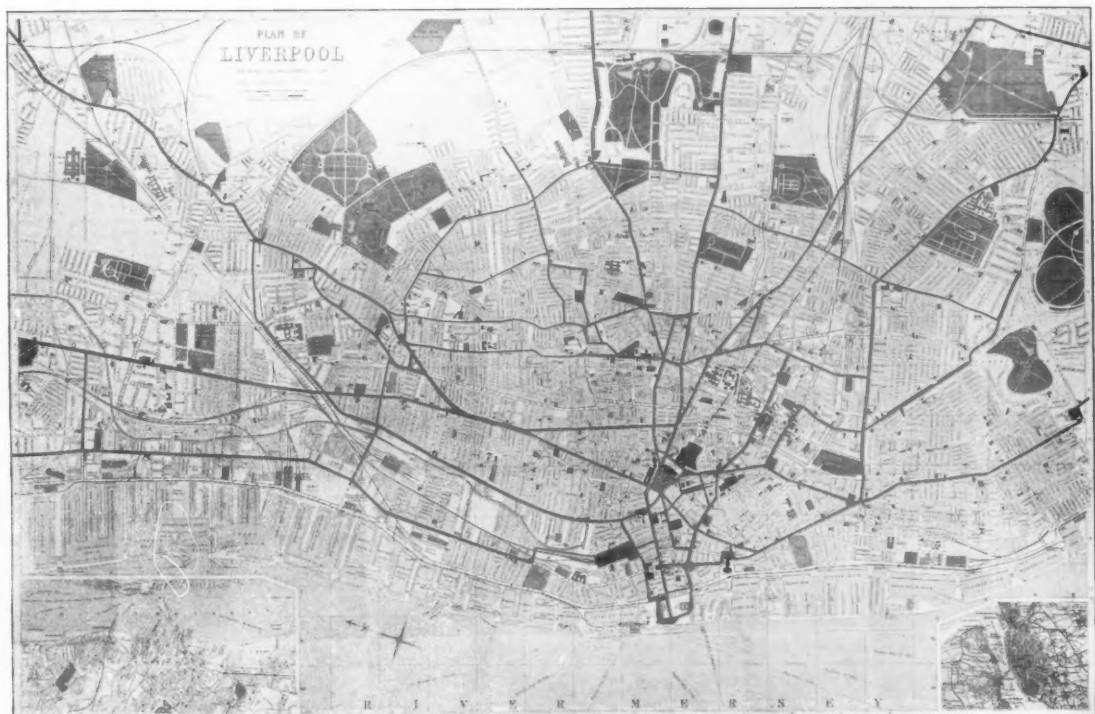


PLAN OF LIVERPOOL IN 1835 (ALSO SMALL PLAN 1729)

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PLAN OF LIVERPOOL IN 1823



PLAN OF LIVERPOOL AT THE PRESENT TIME (BARTHOLOMEW)

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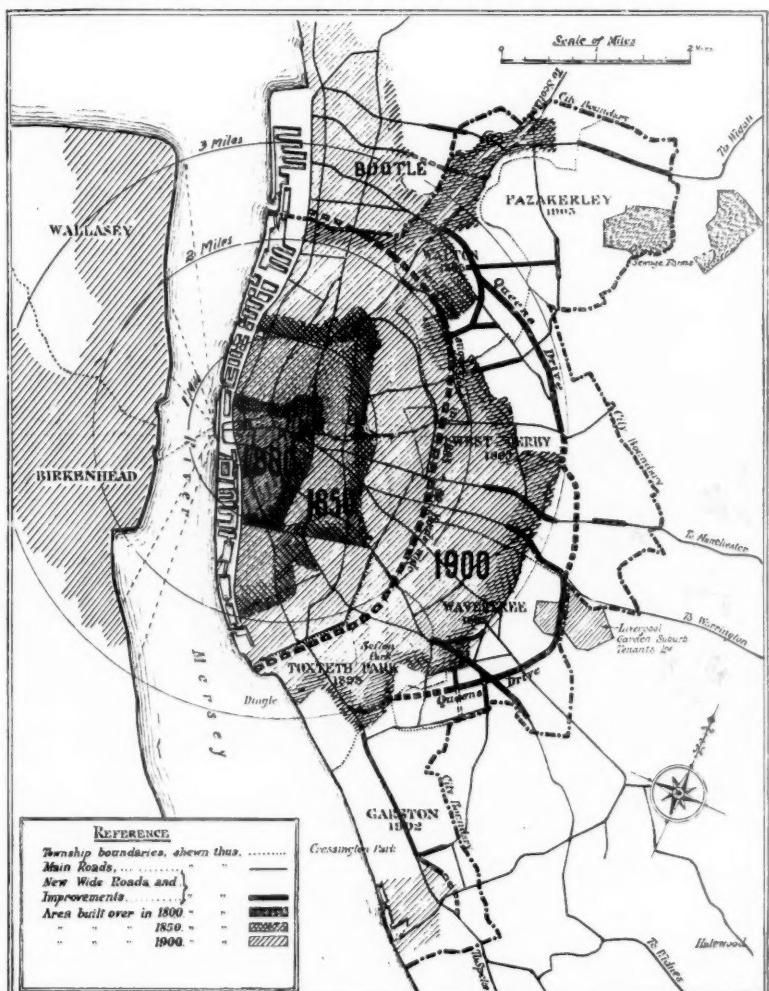


ALLERTON ROAD

far as it is constructed, is already proving an attractive feature and stimulating the development of the outskirts. When these districts on each side of Queen's Drive are completely built up it will be difficult to overestimate the value to Liverpool of such a thoroughfare, both from a traffic and a hygienic point of view.

For many years the corporation has recognised the necessity of providing for the rapidly growing traffic, both as regards main radial avenues communicating with the outer manufacturing districts and also cross roads or means of communication with the districts inside its own boundaries, and it has strenuously adopted the policy of providing such roads so as to secure the easiest and most direct route for general traffic, but more particularly to facilitate and popularise mechanical traction in its best form. The cross roads are laid out so that they shall intersect the radials, and, roughly speaking, divide up the land into more or less square plots, the internal arrangements of the streets in the squares being left to the taste of each individual owner. The case of the Garden Suburb Tenants,

Limited, who are developing a large estate on the outskirts of the city, may be referred to as an example. This estate is intersected by a main cross road 108 ft. wide, and an additional cross road 50 ft. wide has been arranged for, running parallel to the 108 ft. road. The distance between these roads being about 500 yards, intersecting them at right angles is a main radial road through the estate, which has been constructed by widening an old lane to 80 ft., whilst on each side, just outside this area, wide radial roads are also provided. The estate is thus divided into areas, which simplifies the general lay-out and at the same time enhances its value by rendering it easily accessible from all directions.



PLAN ILLUSTRATING THE GROWTH OF LIVERPOOL